

Message Text

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64

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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R 221000Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6769

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

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CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT MY

SUBJECT: VOCATIONAL STUDENTS DEMONSTRATE AGAINST GOVERNMENT

1. OVER 100 MARA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS WERE ARRESTED IN PRE-DAWN HOURS APRIL 22 AS THEY BEGAN MARCH TOWARD KUALA LUMPUR FROM CAMPUS IN SHAH ALAM, ABOUT MID-WAY BETWEEN K.L. AND KELANG. MARCH ON CAPITAL, WHICH REPORTEDLY INVOLVED ABOUT 2000 STUDENTS, BEGAN AFTER CAMPUS RALLIES APRIL 21. PRINCIPAL STUDENT DEMAND WAS RECOGNITION OF MARA AS DEGREE-GRANTING INSTITUTION ON PAR WITH UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA AND OTHER FULL-FLEDGED UNIVERSITIES. IN ADDITION TO MARA STUDENTS, LARGELY COMPRISING VOCATIONAL AND CLERICAL TRAINEES, OTHER STUDENT AND YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING STUDENT UNIONS OF THE ESTABLISHED UNIVERSITIES HAD DECLARED SOLIDARITY WITH MARA OBJECTIVES, ALTHOUGH IT PRESENTLY NOT KNOWN WHETHER NON-MARA STUDENTS TOOK PART IN APRIL 21-22 RALLIES AND MARCH.

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2. ACCORDING RELIABLE PRESS SOURCE, MARCH ON K.L. WAS PROBABLY

AIMED AT ATTRACTING PUBLIC ATTENTION DURING PEAK RUSH HOUR TRAFFIC IN VICINITY OF PARLIAMENT BUILDING. ALSO, IN RECENT WEEKS, MARA STUDENTS HAVE PRESENTED PETITIONS TO NUMBER OF GOVT OFFICIALS, INCLUDING HOME AFFAIRS MINISTER GHAZALI SHAFIE, ON ISSUE OF RAISING MARA STATUS. GOM HERETOFORE RESISTED STUDENT AND FACULTY DEMANDS TO RAISE MARA STATUS TO DEGREE-GRANTING INSTITUTION, ALTHOUGH COMPROMISE INVOLVING AWARD OF DIPLOMAS TO STUDENTS IN CERTAIN FIELDS HAS BEEN MOOTED BY MARA DIRECTOR DATUK ARSHAD AYUB.

3. COMMENT: ISSUE OF MARA'S STATUS APPARENTLY UNCONNECTED WITH INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC ISSUES SEIZED BY STUDENTS LATE LAST YEAR (SEE EMB A-211, 12/3/73) BUT THERE HAS BEEN TREND TOWARD STUDENT ACTIVISM IN PAST THREE MONTHS INVOLVING LOCAL ISSUES, E.G., ALLEGED CORRUPTION BY DATUK HARUN IDRIS AND SELANGOR GOVT OFFICIALS RE AWARD OF TIMBER AND CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS, AND APPOINTMENT OF NEW VICE CHANCELLOR FOR UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN (NATIONAL UNIVERSITY). SITUATION RE MARA UPGRADING IS ALSO ROUGHLY ANALOGOUS TO THAI VOCATIONAL STUDENT AGITATION FOR PARITY WITH UNIVERSITIES. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT MARA RUCKUS HAS WIDER SIGNIFICANCE PER SE, ALTHOUGH IT SIGNIFICANT IN TERMS OF GROWING TREND OF STUDENT PRESSURE ON GOVT ON NUMBER OF DOMESTIC ISSUES. GOM MAY WELL BE COMPELLED TO GIVE IN TO STUDENTS ON MARA ISSUE DUE TO PRE-ELECTION SENSITIVITIES.

UNDERHILL

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